

**Music in a Dark and Silent World [and]
What Goes on in a Blind Man's Mind**

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Music in a Dark and Silent World

HV 1663

Condensed from the *American Weekly*

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HELEN SIEFERT has been totally deaf and blind since infancy. Now a pretty brunette of 18, she is a student at the New York Institute for the Education of the Blind.

She lives in a world of perpetual silence and darkness, yet she can dance expertly to a one-step or waltz and even play a simple nursery tune on the piano.

She cannot hear the music. She receives sound vibrations through her feet; easily recognizing rhythm and pitch when standing on an ingenious apparatus known as a floating floor at the deaf-blind department of the institute.

Born in Minatare, Neb., Helen was stricken with cerebrosplinal meningitis at the age of 21 months. When she recovered, like Helen Keller, another victim of that dreadful disease, she was entirely deaf, blind and mute.

All efforts to reach her unformed mind were futile. Shut off from the world she could not make her wants known. She could follow no example of behavior. She was controlled only by her primitive instincts.

She crawled about the floor like a small animal; screamed when thwarted and had to be fed like a puppy. Her parents were powerless to aid her.

When she was seven an Omaha newspaper publicized her plight and funds were provided to obtain a companion and teacher, Miss Margaret Hoshor, who has remained with her ever since.

Miss Hoshor's first task was to convince her pupil that the shapes she gripped, the masses against which she stumbled, had names and could be identified.

Placing a ball in the child's hand, Miss Hoshor held Helen's thumb to her lips and fingers to her cheek while she pronounced slowly, clearly and many times over the word, "Ball."

Her patient efforts to reach that confined spirit and establish contact between it and the hearing and sighted world were rewarded after three weeks. The lesson was repeated with other objects until Helen grasped the connection between the shapes she held and the strange vibrations she felt on her teacher's lips and cheek.

Soon she was demanding the names of everything her eager fingers could touch.

In two years she could understand words received through the vibrations in her teacher's lips, cheek and even head.

She learned the manual alphabet, a modification of the deaf and dumb alphabet in which the speaker makes signs with her right hand in-

to the left hand of the deaf-blind listener.

She had ceased to be an unreasonable creature. She became a lively, interested, vital personality.

She progressed in spelling by means of raised letters, by typing and by the use of various Braille characters.

Since she had no control of her tongue a series of tongue exercises were given until she could master the positions necessary to form words. These were followed by exercises in breath control, for quality, pitch and accent.

Elementary sounds were practiced by comparison with the position of the instructor's tongue and by manipulation in which her tongue was put in the proper position by tongue applicators. She can now pronounce her words distinctly in a soft, pleasing voice.

For the past eight years she has lived and studied at the New York Institute for the Education of the Blind, the oldest organization of its kind in the Western Hemisphere.

Dr. Merle E. Frampton, principal, added in 1937 the first separate school for the education of the deaf-blind in the U. S.

Under his direction great strides have been made in education research and the training of teachers for the deaf-blind.

An important feature of the deaf-blind department is the music room with its floating floor.

About 14 by 16 feet, the floor is completely isolated from the building structure. It rests upon 30 auto-

mobile inner tubes, size 30 by 3½. They are arranged in six banks of five and kept inflated by a manifold connection. Thus the floor is sensitive to the slightest vibration.

The plans call for loud speakers to be installed under the floor so that vibrations of voice and music can be most distinctly felt. Funds are not yet available for this improvement, so the teachers use a piano placed in one corner of the surface.

At the institute are seven deaf-blind students, from seven to 20 years old. Their afflictions range from total deaf-blindness through total blindness and partial hearing, total deafness and partial sight to faint vision and slight hearing.

They stand in stockings and place their hands on the piano. Thus they feel vibrations of the music through their fingers and through their feet. With little practice they recognize pitch and tempo and can enjoy the music.

Recently old-fashioned music boxes were introduced to the music department. It has been found that the vibrations of the tinkling melodies are more distinct than those of the piano or the guitar.

The students hold the smaller boxes in their arms. In so doing they can feel the vibrations throughout their bodies. They seem to receive more accurate impressions of the tunes in this manner. Helen Siefert already has her favorite tunes.

Dr. Frampton believes that it is not outside the realm of possibility

to train the deaf-blind, through some such method as the use of music boxes, pianos or electric guitars, to become so sensitive to vi-

brations as to be able to interpret sound waves as accurately as though their hearing was unimpaired.



What Goes on in a Blind Man's Mind

BLIND MEN do not live in a world of pitch darkness, rather they continually try to picture in their "mind's eye," what they are passing, such as birds and trees. "I sometimes forget that I am blind," some of them say.

In fact, their inability to see is made up to a great extent by their remarkable ability to visualize, for instance, in learning anatomy. Familiar faces can usually be easily visualized if they have been seen before blindness. People never grow older in the fantasy of the blind.

Strangers are visualized by their voices. Their faces are often a blur, or are assumed to resemble known persons with similar voices.

If they like the person's voice, they may endow her with the features of a beautiful film star; if not, the individual may appear to them as a hideous rogue. Once formed, the mental picture of a person sticks, even if corrected.

Height can be guessed from the direction and age from the tone of the voice. One man had the habit of lifting up people to get some idea about their stature.

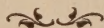
Others run their hands over a person's face; one of them in this way, discovered with delight dimples in his fiancée's face after two years of engagement.

A few blind men have a stereotype setting for all their mental pictures, such as a factory always in the background or the face of a pretty girl in one corner, "like on a picture postcard."

Most blind men on reading Braille bend their head down as if they could see. Some may complain of "eye-ache" after prolonged Braille reading even if then have lost both their eyes.

After some time blind men develop a sense of obstacles. About two or three yards before they come up against them, even the totally blind, experience a sensation of what they describe as a black cloud passing across their minds. They then slow up and put out their hands.

According to most of them the obstacle must be at least waist high to be sensed. Some men allege that they can differentiate between a hedge, a standing car and a gate, from a distance.
—*Psychosomatic Medicine.*



ONE CUBIC YARD of sea-water contains more than 47 pounds of salt, 2 pounds of magnesium, almost $1\frac{1}{2}$ pounds of sulphur, more than $\frac{1}{2}$ pound of calcium, about $\frac{1}{2}$ pound of potassium, and smaller amounts of iron, copper, lead, molybdenum, silver, vanadium, mercury, gold, radium and uranium. — *Oceans in the Sky* by Vera Edelstadt.

Breaking the Building Blockade

Condensed from the book *Breaking the Building Blockade*

Robert Lasch

Editorial writer, *The Chicago Sun*

WHAT can be done about the housing problem?

Broadly, first of all, we must devise ways to reduce the cost of housing, so that more people will be able to afford good, new shelter.

The \$6,000 house must become, without sacrifice of quality, a \$5,000 house; and the \$5,000 house must be redesigned and rebuilt at a cost of \$4,000, and ultimately \$3,000, so that good shelter can be afforded by the majority of our people who in normal times have incomes of less than \$2,000 a year.

Both for those who want to own and for those who want to rent, the housing value received for a dollar of outlay must be drastically increased.

But the cost of building a house has shown no tendency to decline over the years with improvement of technical knowledge. Instead, data point to an actual increase of construction costs during the last twenty years.

Unlike other producers of durable goods, the housebuilding industry has a peculiar habit of raising costs as its output rises.

During the twenties the steepest rise in costs took place between

1922 and 1925, which was precisely the period of sharpest increase in volume of residential construction.

At the first sign of building recovery in 1935 and 1936, building prices shot up again, well in advance of other prices.

From 1939 to mid-1945 it was estimated that the cost of building a standard six-room house had risen at least 30 percent.

When total construction costs are analyzed, they look like this:

	Percent
Materials.....	5
Labor at site.....	3
Contractors' overhead and profit.....	1

Between 1929 and 1935, automobile manufacturers found out how to eliminate the assembly of thirty separate parts and to save fifty hours of labor per car by stamping the underbody in one piece. The labor cost of putting together a sedan door was reduced from \$4.00 to 15 cents.

Nothing could be more unlike the automobile industry than housebuilding as it is now organized.

Housebuilding is a small-scale business. The typical general contractor builds only two or three houses a year; many build less.

Until the war brought forth a few

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From-American Weekly.

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1525 9 "	6 "	"	1532 13 "	10 "	"
1526 $9\frac{3}{4}$ "	$7\frac{1}{2}$ "	"	1533 14 "	11 "	"
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